



# Fort Sumter Sentinel

## General Management Plan Amendment/ Environmental Assessment Completed

### Environmental Assessment Process Completed

The National Park Service has completed the General Management Plan Amendment and Environmental Assessment for a second ferry departure point to Fort Sumter National Monument. This is the result of the planning process in which a preferred alternative for two ferry departure points has been evaluated and selected. Two ferry departure points will exist, one at Liberty Square and a second departure point located in the Mount Pleasant / East Cooper River area.

### Environmental Assessment

The General Management Plan Amendment and Environmental Assessment describes the purpose and need for the project, the available alternatives (including ones that were considered but eliminated from further consideration), the existing natural and cultural resources in the project area, and the potential environmental effects of each alternative. A rationale for selection of the preferred alternative, and an assessment of the environmentally preferable alternative (determined to be the same as the preferred alternative) are also provided.

The need for a second ferry departure point is related to the many changes that have occurred in the Charleston area, including rapid growth and increased visitation to the park and other surrounding attractions.

A variety of draft alternatives were considered in the environmental assessment. These were screened down to two alternatives that were carried forward for detailed analysis in the environmental assessment. These two alternatives included: (1) providing one departure point at Liberty Square (no action); and (2) providing a ferry



*Aerial view of Fort Sumter National Monument*

departure point in the Mount Pleasant/East Cooper River area while also maintaining the Liberty Square departure point (the preferred alternative). The preferred alternative is the one that meets the objectives associated with the purpose and need for the project. The preferred alternative will include two ferry departure points - one at Liberty Square and another departure point located in the Mount Pleasant/East Cooper River area. The following is a summary of the main features of the preferred alternative.

**Facilities Description:** The existing National Park Service Liberty Square facility, including the museum, square, and a large ferry service and dock facility, will continue to operate as a departure point for Fort Sumter. An additional

departure point will be maintained in the Mount Pleasant/East Cooper River area.

**Visitor Services Provided:** The existing interpretive facility at Liberty Square will continue to provide visitor services. A second and smaller facility will be constructed, if necessary, or incorporated within an existing facility and operated in the Mount Pleasant/East Cooper River area. This facility will include a dock, ticket sales area, restrooms, exhibits, parking area, and connecting access roads with appropriate directional signs.

**Facilities Requirements:** No additional facilities will be required at Liberty Square. Similar facilities will be required at the Mount Pleasant/East Cooper River area departure point to support visitor

needs described above. Additionally, periodic maintenance dredging will not be required at Liberty Square for the ferry. Maintenance dredging may be required at a second location to a depth of up to 15 feet mean low water (depending on the configuration of the ferry) to provide an adequate water depth to operate a ferry safely, accomodating 300 or more passengers.



Existing Liberty Square Visitor and Education Center

Unlike the no action alternative, the preferred alternative provides a long- term solution to the area's need for a second departure point, allowing for the widest range of beneficial uses of the environment, natural and cultural resource protection, and visitor safety and enjoyment, without degradation of resources. The preferred alternative will result in moderate to major, long- term beneficial effects on visitor use and experience.



Superintendent John Tucker speaks at Mount Pleasant public meeting on October 29, 2003.

The project area is characterized by a wide variety of natural and cultural resources. These resources were evaluated in the environmental assessment, and include productive estuarine waters and bottom areas, valuable shellfish and fisheries resources, rare, threatened or endangered species, productive salt and freshwater wetlands, and a variety of archeological and historical resources. The environmental assessment documented the presence or potential presence of these resources in the project area, and the potential effects of the alternatives on each resource. However, the majority of the impacts of constructing, if necessary, and operating a second departure point in the Mount Pleasant/East Cooper River area will cause negligible to minor, long- term, adverse effects. These effects can all be avoided, reduced, or minimized through careful site selection, on- site design and implementation of mitigation measures.

### Results of Public Review

The draft General Management Plan Amendment and Environmental Assessment was released for public review for a period of 30 days ending on November 19, 2003. Three public meetings were conducted between October 27- 29, 2003, in North Charleston, Mount Pleasant, and in the City of Charleston to obtain public input. The National Park Service also requested input from all of the federally recognized tribes, as well as federal, state and local agencies.

The majority of the comments were in support of, or showed a preference for a departure point located in the Mount Pleasant / East Cooper River area. In addition to these written comments, seven individuals spoke at the public meeting in Mount Pleasant.

Nine comments addressed subjects including the use of technical definitions in the environmental assessment, elimination of water shuttles as a possible alternative, required vessel lengths, the need for construction under the preferred

alternative, roads, Americans with Disabilities Act requirements for vessels or ferry docks, conformance to terms of concessions contracts, and wastewater disposal.

All of the comments received during the public review period were reviewed and addressed in the *Finding of No Significant Impact*. This is a document signed by National Park Service officials that specifies the proposed project will not have a significant effect on the human environment, and that an Environmental Impact Statement is not required. The *Finding of No Significant Impact* was approved on November 26, 2003, and is available on the Fort Sumter National Monument website located at:

<http://www.nps.gov/fosu/pphtml/documents.html>



National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

The National Park Service appreciates your interest in the planning process. If you would like additional information, feel free to contact us at the park.

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